



News Release

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Southwest Region - Arizona-New Mexico - Texas - Oklahoma
Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge Sasabe, Arizona
<http://southwest.fws.gov>

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BUENOS AIRES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE CONDUCTING PRESCRIBED FIRES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge will be conducting a series of prescribed fires beginning May 1 and continuing through June 16. The Refuge is continuing a proactive land management approach by using fire as management tool. The 2012 goal of treating approximately 6,500 acres will reduce the future possibility of wildfires while enhancing critical wildlife habitat and restoring native grassland processes.

Prescribed burning, conducted under an approved plan with the use of adequate firefighting resources, is the best method to prevent potential loss from a wildfire. Firefighters from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service will be assisting local Refuge Fire Management personnel with the prescribed fires.

Historically, natural fires occurred every five to ten years but fire suppression efforts, along with development and grazing, have altered the natural fire cycle. Mesquite trees have flourished with the absence of fire and these trees continue to dominate Refuge vegetation, choking out the once open semidesert grassland.

Prescribed burning reduces the total amount of vegetation and stimulates growth of native species that are adapted to naturally occurring fires. Refuge biologists and fire personnel worked together to develop a plan that will benefit wildlife and promote the habitat needs of endangered species, such as the masked bobwhite quail. Prescribed burning treatments, while expensive, may cost as little as one tenth that of a large scale, wildfire suppression effort. All burn plans are developed using national interagency standards developed by qualified and experienced fire management professionals. The plans are extensively reviewed and must be approved by the Refuge Manager prior to ignition.

Fire Management personnel on the Buenos Aires NWR will closely monitor weather and fuel conditions to maximize results and minimize smoke impacts on adjacent communities. Burns will only be conducted during the daytime hours. Highway 286 and the Arivaca-Sasabe road may be heavily impacted by smoke for short periods of time. Smoke may also be visible to

residents in Arivaca, Sasabe, Three Points, Green Valley, Nogales and Tucson in southern Arizona.

The National Wildlife Refuge System (<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>) includes more than 2,500 miles of land and water trails. There is at least one national wildlife refuge in every state and one within an hour's drive of most major cities.

National wildlife refuges are dedicated to the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats. The nation's 556 national wildlife refuges and other units of the Refuge System, plus 38 wetland management districts, offer a wide range of wildlife-dependent recreation — from fishing, boating, hunting and hiking to wildlife observation and photography, nature interpretation and environmental education. Refuges offer many programs and events geared to families and children. These include festivals, junior naturalist classes, boating and fishing instruction, crafts and more.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest>

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NOTE: For local fire restrictions and fire information for Federal, Tribal and State lands in Arizona and New Mexico:

- Check our website <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/fire>
- Phone 1-877-864-6985 (toll-free)